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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage August 22 on the aftermath of the combustion of a China Airlines passenger jet in Okinawa Monday; on President Chen Shui-bian's transit in Alaska Tuesday morning; on local pig farmers' strong protests Tuesday over the Taiwan government's controversial decision on the use of ractopamine in pork; on the 2008 presidential election; and on the largest cluster infection of dengue fever in nearly 10 years in Tainan. The pro-independence "Liberty Times" ran a banner headline on page four that said "Transiting the United States, Bian Protests by Wearing a 'UN for Taiwan' Sticker." The pro-unification "United Daily News" also ran a banner headline on page five that read "The Worst-ever Transit Treatment: Bian Arrives in Alaska and Protests [the United States] by Refusing to Get off His Plane."

¶2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial said Taiwan's efforts to maintain its independence are designed to assist the U.S. policy to promote democracy globally. The article urged Washington not to suppress Taiwan's moves to maintain its independence and thereby support China's hegemonic expansion. A commentary in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" said President Chen's constant abuse of the credibility of "summit diplomacy" is the fuse that triggered the United States to humiliate Taiwan's leaders with "transit diplomacy." A "United Daily News" analysis commented on President Chen's protest during his transit in Alaska and said Taiwan's room for survival in the international community will grow smaller and smaller if it does not have strong national strength as its backing. Former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Randall Schriver opined in the pro-independence,

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English-language "Taipei Times" that Taiwan needs "six new assurances" from the United States. Former AIT Chairman Nat Bellocchi also opined in the "Taipei Times" calling for more dialogue between the United States and Taiwan. End summary.

A) "Maintaining Taiwan's Democracy and Independence Is the Joint Interests Shared between Taiwan and the United States"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (8/22):

"Chinese President Hu Jintao recently paid a visit to Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan and attended the summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). He also traveled to Russia to observe the joint counter-terrorism military drills conducted by the SCO. ... Central Asia has rich oil resources and is an area of strategic importance. In the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States directed its war on terrorism at Central Asia, and the U.S. military deployment in Central Asian countries also aroused doubts from China and Russia. One of the major functions of the SCO is to create a platform for China and Russia to join hands with Central Asian countries in an attempt to prevent the United States from promoting democracy in Central Asia. Equally importantly, it

is also aimed at preventing Central Asia from becoming a forward base for the United States to restrain China and Russia. ...

"Judging by this strategic landscape, Taiwan, as a democratic country, plays a very critical role with regard to the United States' policy to promote democracy globally. ... In this vein, maintaining independence and self-determination of democratic Taiwan so that it can be a driving force to push for democracy globally can be regarded as a joint interest shared between the United States and Taiwan. In contrast, if [the United States] adopts an ambiguous attitude toward cross-Straits issues, sitting idly by and allowing totalitarian China to invade and occupy Taiwan gradually, China's aggressiveness will surely expand to covet the Korean Peninsula, Japan, the South China Sea, and put the Western Pacific under its shadow, once the Taiwan Strait becomes the inland sea of China. Should this happen, the serious concern over peace and security of the Western Pacific area as specified in the 'Taiwan Relations Act' will certainly become empty talk.

"Over the recent years, China has put on a smiling face covered with 'harmonious world' and 'peaceful rise,' but in reality, it has been engaged in flagrant efforts proactively to expand its military buildup, with its national defense budget marking double-digit growth. China demonstrated its arbitrariness and showed no hesitation to use force when it comes to its various disputes with its neighboring countries, particularly Taiwan. Given such circumstances, Taiwan's efforts in maintaining independence and self-determination are designed to assist the United States' policy to promote democracy all over the world. If the United States regards Taiwan's moves to secure independence as trouble and suppress it just to cater to China, it will be akin to supporting China's hegemonic expansion and shooting oneself in the foot. Our American friends thus must think about this very clearly."

B) "Lee Teng-hui Is Much Braver"

The "Short Commentary" column in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] wrote (8/22):

"... Having risen to power seven years ago, the treatment Chen Shui-bian received when transiting the United States has been downgraded very quickly. It is really sad to see that Chen started by being able to receive interviews openly on the streets of New York and take a boat tour on the Hudson River with [former AIT Chairperson] Therese Shaheen, to this time where he was not even allowed to stay overnight and had to protest in such an unusual manner. ...

"Frankly speaking, the United States, without a doubt, has no right to interfere with the Taiwan people's basic human rights to conduct a referendum. But the Bian administration's constant abuse and overspending of the public credibility of 'summit diplomacy' might as well be considered as a fuse triggering Washington to humiliate Taiwan's head of state with 'transit diplomacy.' The Americans have improperly humiliated Taiwan, but A-Bian has also humiliated himself."

C) "Awkward Itinerary, and Limited Leeway in the International Community"

Journalist Cheng Jen-wen noted in the "News Perspective" column in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (8/22):

"... Affected by the UN referendum, Bian was allowed to stay shortly in Alaska. This is of course a result of diplomatic confrontation, also a reflection of the asymmetrical structure of international political powers, in particular under the U.S. hegemony. ... Given the extremely imbalanced Taiwan-U.S. relations, for everything it does Taiwan has to watch the United States' expression for signs of approval. For the situation between Taiwan and Latin American countries, and the situation between Latin American countries and the United States, it is a different issue. ... Compared with Latin American countries, Taiwan has even [more severely] limited bargaining chips. Unlike those Latin American countries which dare to challenge the United States loudly, Taiwan's status in the international community is in a very unfavorable situation. Given

the pressure of both the United States and China, all Taiwan can do is to manage to seek very limited leeway for its survival in the international community.

"While visiting other countries to promote Taiwan's foreign relations and attempting to protest the U.S. transit treatment with dignity, President Chen, with only one year remaining in his term of office, should turn around and think about whether the DPP, having overturned an authoritarian system, has really strived to enhance Taiwan's national strength. Without strong national strength as its support and in the face of squeezing by great powers, Taiwan's room for survival in the international community will only grow smaller and smaller."

D) "Taiwan Needs 'Six New Assurances'"

Randall Schriver, former U.S. deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs and a founding partner of Armitage International, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (8/22):

"... The debate over these six assurances is misleading. In actuality, the most important question here is not whether the US will publicly repeat the six assurances or not. ... The more important questions relate to why government officials in Taiwan feel so insecure and so in need of public reassurance, and what the US can say and do to help provide genuine reassurance. ...

"It has been over three years since the last major policy address by a Washington-based, senior US official on US-Taiwan Relations. The last such occasion was when then-assistant secretary of state James Kelly testified before the House International Relations Committee in April 2004 marking the 25th Anniversary of the TRA. In his testimony, Kelly said, 'our position continues to be embodied in the so-called 'six assurances' offered to Taiwan by [former] president [Ronald] Reagan.' While his words were reassuring at the time, I think over the three years since this testimony, trust between the US and Taiwan has weakened. Thus there is a need today for a strong, clear statement from a senior US official that will move us toward genuine reassurance. If the US government does see fit, I suggest they not think about reissuing the old six assurances -- rather, they should consider delivering 'six new assurances.' Crafting a policy message that is appropriate for contemporary circumstances, including an acknowledgment of the remarkable changes that have taken place in both China and Taiwan can set us on a better course.

"The 'six new assurances' might look something like this:

"One, the survival and success of democracy in Taiwan is in the interest of the US and thus the US government will endorse efforts that deepen and strengthen Taiwan's democracy. Two, the US will always honor the TRA, and will continue to pay special attention to ensure the US government makes available to Taiwan weapons needed for self-defense, and that the US military maintains the capacity to resist force in the Taiwan Strait if instructed to do so. Three, the US endorses cross-Strait dialogue and interactions but will not pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) on terms Taiwan may deem as unfavorable. Four, issues related to the sovereignty of Taiwan are for the people of the PRC and the people of Taiwan to decide peacefully themselves; the US will not formally recognize the PRC's sovereignty over Taiwan; the US will not support any outcome achieved through the use of force, nor any outcome that does not enjoy the support among the majority of the free people of Taiwan.

"Five, the US needs good relations with China to further a broad range of security interests. However, under no circumstances will the US seek to curry favor with China by making sacrifices in its relationship with Taiwan. The US-Taiwan bilateral relationship is a valuable in its own right and worthy of greater investment. The US will not agree to 'co-manage' the issue of Taiwan with the PRC. Six, Taiwan as a successful democracy, a thriving economy, and a global leader in health and science stands to contribute far greater as a good citizen of the world. The US will seek to promote opportunities for Taiwan to participate meaningfully in international organizations, and will resist pressure to isolate

Taiwan from participating and/or benefiting from the cooperative work among nations in international organizations."

E) "It's Time for Creativity: Beyond a Referendum"

Nat Bellocchi, former AIT chairman and now a special adviser to the Liberty Times Group, opined in the pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] (8/22):

"Now both sides of the pan-blue pan-green political spectrum support including a referendum in the next presidential election. In expressing disapproval of the referendum effort, the US may now have helped ignite stronger disapproval from China. It is clear that some means of preventing a serious problem in the Taiwan Strait is needed, or -- at the very least -- means of minimizing any harm to US interests. ...

"In terms of continuing policies, China clearly continues its policy in the same way it always has: Taiwan is a part of China and that's it. Can the US continue its fundamental policies on cross-strait issues? Taiwan inevitably cannot. The US has a dialogue with China, but what is needed is a dialogue between the US and Taiwan that would keep problems from getting out of control. Referendums are common in democracies, and having not had one in Taiwan for so long and then being told not to is not easy. Taiwanese know they have that right and political leaders are not likely to give it up. Perhaps the leaders could convince the people that the referendum could be put off for the time being if the country -- and the people's livelihoods -- could be lifted now.

"One thing that might contribute to that is a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). There has been some talk that the US ought to offer an FTA to Taiwan for a variety of reasons, the main one being that it would be good for both the US and Taiwan. Perhaps there is some possibility in that. Whatever can be decided between the US and Taiwan in that regard would not only contribute to Taiwan's economic or security matters at home, but would also strengthen its democratic system. It would also likely be helpful in international matters -- and for strengthening the US' position in East Asia."

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